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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9888  
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY  
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0010  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 7270

UNCLAS JAKARTA 002314

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
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SECSTATE FOR EAP/IET AND DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: UNHCR TO ASSIST CUBAN CITIZEN HELD IN WEST TIMOR

1. (SBU) UNHCR/Jakarta informed us February 21 that it plans to assist Ramon Ballesteros Escobar, a Cuban citizen, with refugee assistance after he illegally crossed into Indonesia from East Timor earlier this month. Immigration authorities are holding Escobar at an Immigration detention facility in Kupang, West Timor. According to the press, Escobar refused return to East Timor or to Cuba and instead requested "deportation" to the United States. Shinji Kubo, head of Protective Services at UNCHR in Jakarta, told us that the Indonesian Immigration Department has an internal directive to refer all asylum cases to UNHCR. Immigration has already made arrangements for UNHCR to visit Escobar and a UNHCR staff member is enroute to Kupang to see him. Kubo said that the only complication was Escobar's request for direct US Embassy assistance. We told Kubo that should Escobar contact us, we would refer him to UNHCR per our normal procedure.

2. (SBU) Kubo said that based on Indonesia's record in recent years, he is confident that Indonesia will not forcibly remove Escobar or deport him until UNHCR completes its report. Kubo assured us that he would contact the Embassy should he suspect that the GOI will forcibly remove Escobar. A Foreign Ministry official in the Directorate of East Asian and Pacific Affairs told us February 21 that the Indonesian government has no official position on Escobar's case at this time. We will continue to follow this case through our contacts at UNHCR and the Foreign Ministry.

PASCOE